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Evaluation

Evaluation of the UNDP contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment

Executive summary

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I. Introduction

1. Gender equality remains a crucial and unfulfilled human rights issue. Together with the empowerment of women, it is a major theme in the global commitments emerging from the world conferences of the 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century including the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals and their reviews, Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security and the United Nations 2005 World Summit. Gender equality is recognized as integral to successful human development.

2. The UNDP response was to adopt gender mainstreaming for all its activities across the board and develop a gender equality strategy for the period 2008-2013 aiming to: (a) develop capacities, in-country and in-house, to integrate gender concerns into all programmes and practice areas; (b) provide gender-responsive policy advisory services that promote gender equality and women's empowerment in all focus areas, including country programmes, planning instruments and sector-wide programmes; and (c) support specific interventions that benefit women and scale up innovative models.

3. In 2014 and early 2015, the UNDP Independent Evaluation Office (IEO) conducted a thematic evaluation of the contribution of UNDP to gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation, undertaken in response to Executive Board decision 2010/15, used as its frames of reference the UNDP Strategic Plan, 2008-2013, approved by the Executive Board in 2008, and the gender equality strategy, which was "designed to complement and reinforce [the] UNDP Strategic Plan ... by defining in more detail how attention to gender equality and women's empowerment will strengthen action in all areas of our work".[1] As the second IEO exercise[2] dedicated to the theme, this evaluation assesses the overall performance of UNDP in mainstreaming gender and the organization's contribution to development results and institutional change in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment. The purposes of the evaluation are to: (a) provide substantive support to the Administrator's accountability function in reporting to the Executive Board; (b) support greater accountability to stakeholders and partners; (c) serve as a means of quality assurance for UNDP interventions, and; (d) contribute to learning at corporate, regional and country levels.

II. Background

4. The objectives of the evaluation were to:

(a) assess the contributions of UNDP to gender equality and women's empowerment during the period 2008-2013;
(b) assess the extent to which the gender equality strategy functioned as an integrating dimension in the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013;
(c) provide actionable recommendations of relevance to the implementation of the current UNDP gender equality strategy (2014–2017). In addition, it is expected that the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation will be of relevance with respect to the formulation of both the next strategic plan and gender strategy.

5. The scope of the evaluation is aligned with the vision of the 2008-2013 Strategic Plan of mainstreaming gender at the global, regional and country levels throughout the four UNDP focus areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, and energy and environment. The evaluation covers two distinct but interlinked results

[1] UNDP, 'Empowered and Equal: Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011', New York, 2008.
[2] Evaluation of Gender Mainstreaming in UNDP, 2006.

areas as framed in the strategy: (a) development results; and (b) institutional results. Specifically, the evaluation assesses the extent to which the strategy functioned as "an integrating dimension of UNDP work"[3] in the implementation of the Strategic Plan. It is important to note that because the strategy was framed as a means of providing guidance, the evaluation does not address of the content of the strategy as a stand-alone document. Instead, it is an inquiry into the extent to which the strategy played a role in guiding the institutional and development contributions which UNDP made to gender equality and women's empowerment during the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013.

6. The evaluation sought to answer the following questions:

(a) Has UNDP contributed to gender equality and women's empowerment development results?

(i) How effective has UNDP been in contributing to development results being gender- responsive?[4]
(ii) To what extent has UNDP contributed to development results being gender-transformative?[5]
(iii) What is the value added by UNDP in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment results?
(iv) How has UNDP used partnerships to promote gender equality and women's empowerment at the global, regional and national levels?

(b) Has UNDP integrated gender equality across the institution at the programme, policy, technical, and cultural levels during the period 2008-2013?

(i) How effective has UNDP been in implementing gender mainstreaming and contributing to institutional change results?
(ii) How effective has UNDP been in building in-house gender equality capacity and accountability frameworks?
(iii) To what extent is gender equality a priority in the culture and leadership of the organization?

(c) Where have the institutional change results of UNDP been the most and least successful in improving gender equality and women's empowerment development results?

(i) To what extent has UNDP gender mainstreaming strengthened the link between development results and institutional change?
(ii) What are the key factors contributing to successful gender equality and women's empowerment results?
(iii) To what extent has UNDP learned from past evaluation findings to strengthen gender equality results at the programme and institutional levels?

7. The evaluation also assessed the positioning of UNDP in the area of gender and women's empowerment in relation to other United Nations agencies (United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and others), and its contribution to advancing gender equality in the country context.

[3] UNDP, Gender Equality Strategy 2008-2011, p2.
[4] Gender-responsive results address differential needs of men and women and the equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status and rights but do not address the root causes of inequalities in their lives.
[5] Gender-transformative results contribute to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations. The aim is to redefine systems and institutions where inequalities were created and maintained.

III. Findings on the UNDP contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment (2008-2013)

A. Assessment of institutional change results in UNDP

Planning and resources

8. The first UNDP gender equality strategy was a significant step forward with regard to planning guidance on gender mainstreaming and programming. The strategy included programmatic and institutional guidance and a results framework, both of which are essential ingredients for strong gender mainstreaming. However, it was not endorsed by the Executive Board, making it a set of voluntary guidelines that weakened its potential impact and integration. In a context where there are multiple competing priorities, staff reported that they do not prioritize an issue unless a guidance document has been endorsed by the Board or it is considered a mandatory and urgent directive from the Administrator.

9. UNDP did not establish clear, steady financial benchmarks and mechanisms in support of core gender team activities during 2008-2013.[6] Despite a promising increase from $4.2 million in 2008 to an average of $6.13 million over the period 2009-2012, the expenditure of the Gender Unit was reduced to $4.16 million in 2013, a level even lower than that of 2008. In 2014, it was further reduced to $3.37 million. The expenditure of the Gender Unit also saw a growing share of non-core resources as a percentage of its budget, from 23 per cent in 2008 to 39 per cent in 2013. This also impacted the number of global team staff, which grew from four posts in 2006 to 23 posts in 2010, but had declined to eight posts by 2013.

10. In terms of the gender architecture to support gender mainstreaming, gender practice leaders consistently were at the P-5 level in each regional bureau. Evidence suggests that the majority of country offices have received support from gender practice leaders and that this guidance was valued. However, at the country level the gender function remained understaffed throughout the evaluation period. Only 45 per cent of country offices in 2013 had gender focal team structures in place, signaling a relatively weak response to the indicators established in the Strategic Plan. Previous evaluations and reports have pointed to a cross-unit gender focal team, led by a senior gender adviser, as the optimal arrangement in terms of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. The evaluation found that gender focal points covered gender issues in 80 per cent of country offices, only 20 per cent of them worked full time on the issue, and these staff were at junior levels with little specialized gender training.

Innovations to promote gender mainstreaming

11. The Gender Strategy Implementation Committee (GSIC) is a mechanism that has evolved from a pro forma exercise to become a key instrument for senior managers at headquarters level to report on accountability for promoting gender equality. It has functioned mainly as a forum for sharing cross-bureau experiences. Regional GSICs, which were an explicit target in the strategy, have yet to become a uniform feature across all regions.

12. The Gender Equality Seal pilot is a unique initiative developed by UNDP and applied in around 30 country offices since 2010. The certification process has motivated and tapped a competitive vein among country offices volunteering to be part of the pilot process. While it is too soon to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Seal's impact on gender equality results, it is clear that it is motivating change and promoting gender mainstreaming as something tangible and achievable.

[6] It should be noted that during this period, there was an overall reduction in UNDP expenditures.

Tracking gender investments and reporting on results

13. The gender marker was introduced in 2009. Making it a mandatory requirement at the budget submission stage has succeeded in heightening awareness of the need to consider gender at the initial budget allocation stage. Nevertheless, evidence suggests that the gender marker is not being used effectively as a planning tool and is disconnected from the workflow of the programme cycle. Furthermore, there are variations in the way the gender marker codes are assigned, which has compromised the accuracy of the information produced by this tool.

14. The results-oriented annual report incorporated gender considerations beginning in 2008. As a mandatory requirement, it has become an important driver of promoting reporting on gender equality. However, this corporate reporting does not systematically track the quality or type of gender results and has not explored trends or systematically explored how change happens in work on gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender parity and organizational culture

15. UNDP has been working on internal gender parity issues since 1995 and has achieved gender parity at the aggregate level. However, it lags behind in parity at the senior (D-1/D-2) and middle management (P-4/P-5) levels, which is a serious concern. While many policies have been institutionalized to promote more female candidates, this has not yielded tangible results. Furthermore, no explicit steps are being taken to address the concerns of males about the effects of these pro-female policies on their career prospects.

16. While UNDP has instituted policies and mandatory mechanisms to promote gender equality and women's empowerment and sensitize staff on gender issues, its organizational culture of promoting these areas remains weak. Trends from the annual UNDP global staff survey indicate consistent differences in the way female and male staff members score issues dealing with empowerment, professional growth, fairness/respect, work-life balance and conflict management. Women generally score these aspects less favourably than men.

Accountability and oversight

17. The 2009 UNDP handbook on planning, monitoring and evaluating for results does not provide adequate guidance on how to undertake gender-related evaluation and is limited to highlighting gender-targeting inputs such as the need for sex-disaggregated data. Furthermore, decentralized evaluations have not paid sufficient attention to ensuring that the gender dimensions of UNDP programmes are consistently covered in depth. In terms of audit, the practice of the Office of Audit and Investigations conforms to international standards based on risk assessment. The focus has been limited to assessing gender-parity levels in country offices and there has been no systematic practice of undertaking gender-responsive audits.

Knowledge management and communication

18. UNDP developed a set of global and regional knowledge platforms and communities of practice on gender during the evaluation period, but these have not been sustained. The use of knowledge products was also not systematically tracked or monitored. Cybermetric analysis revealed that the UNDP network of websites is highly complex and potentially difficult for users to navigate overall. Furthermore, regional and country-level interviews stressed that the lack of gender materials in languages other than English posed a problem.

United Nations system coordination and partnerships on gender

19. UNDP country offices are members of United Nations country gender theme groups and participate in joint gender programmes. Evidence indicates however that programming

in this context is still at a nascent stage in terms of the capacity of the United Nations system to absorb a joint modality. The relationship with UN-Women at country level is central to such coordination and as UN-Women establishes a firmer global footprint, a maturing partnership is emerging between the two agencies based on acknowledged comparative advantages that address country-specific contexts and needs.

20. With 62 entities currently participating, the United Nations System-wide Action Plan (UN-SWAP) on gender mainstreaming represents an advance in terms of accountability and coherence. While the framework relies on self-reported data and is susceptible to overrating, the UN-SWAP still provides a systematic means for collection of data on common performance indicators within UNDP and across the United Nations system. UNDP has been recognized by UN-Women as spearheading initiatives that propel progress on gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

B. Assessment of the UNDP contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment development results

Overall findings

21. To assess the effectiveness of gender results, the evaluation developed a five-point gender results effectiveness scale.[7] Results from all focus areas except democratic governance were overwhelmingly gender-targeted, limited to counting the number of women and men involved. Democratic governance was the only area that consistently delivered on gender-responsive results (over 62 per cent), demonstrating more meaningful results by addressing the differential needs and priorities of women and men.

22. To assess the quality of gender results, the evaluation used the Gender@Work[8] quadrants of change.[9] With respect to the quality of gender results, the major UNDP contribution is in the areas of greater access to resources and opportunities, changed policies, laws and institutional arrangements and strengthened consciousness and awareness-raising. A few results signal that UNDP has contributed to systemic changes in internal culture and deep structure, which are needed for transformative change.

23. UNDP faces many barriers to taking a strategic, longer-term approach that would stimulate transformative change. Many project and programme cycles are short-term, lasting a couple of years. UNDP tends to engage in programming that addresses practical

[7] Gender results effectiveness scale:

Gender-negative: result had a negative outcome that aggravated or reinforced existing gender inequalities and norms.

Gender-blind: result had no attention to gender, failed to acknowledge the different needs of men, women, girls and boys, or marginalized populations.

Gender-targeted: result focused on the number or equity (50/50) of women, men or marginalized populations that were targeted.

Gender-responsive: result address differential needs of men or women and address equitable distribution of benefits, resources, status, rights but do not address root causes of inequalities in their lives.

Gender-transformative: result contributes to changes in norms, cultural values, power structures and the roots of gender inequalities and discriminations. The aim is to redefine systems and institutions where inequalities are created and maintained.

[8] The Gender@Work framework draws from instruments developed by an international collaborative that helps organizations to build cultures of equality and social justice, with a focus on gender equality.

[9] Quadrants of change are:

Consciousness and awareness: changes must occur in women's and men's consciousness, capacities and behaviour.

Access to resources and opportunities: changes that occur in terms of access to resources, services and opportunities. *Formal policies, laws and institutional arrangements:* formal rules/ adequate and gender equitable policies and laws that must be in place to protect against gender discrimination.

Informal cultural norms and deep structure: changes in deep structure, implicit norms and social values which undergird the way institutions operate, often in invisible ways.

needs for women and has not consistently leveraged the added value of its long-term presence in a country to tackle deeper structural change. Uniform categorizing for the capture and documenting of gender-responsive and gender-transformative change have also been challenging. Instances of backlash[10] were reported across all thematic areas. Backlash raises the issue of the sustainability of results. Gender analysis and monitoring and evaluation of gender results have been inconsistent in tracking gender reversals.

24. The lack of gender analysis in programme design was evident in all focus areas. Dedicated funds are not regularly set aside for gender analysis at the design stage or for outcome monitoring and evaluation. Despite efforts to institutionalize gender thinking and the perception that the organization is now 'gender aware', the evaluation found that there is a lack of deeper understanding of what gender means in relation to development programming. In practice, 'doing gender' in UNDP often comes down to a targeting perspective and women are often framed in a context of vulnerability rather than as key actors in a transformative social and development change process.

25. UNDP is recognized for its groundbreaking and innovative contribution to human development through its Human Development Report and Gender Inequality Index. However, the evaluation found little evidence that UNDP has succeeded in integrating such thinking in programming at the country and regional levels. It is not recognized as a thought leader in the area of gender equality and women's empowerment and it is more common for UNDP to be described as a facilitator, enabler and useful reference point on United Nations commitments.

Gender results in the four focus areas of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013

26. **Poverty alleviation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.** In the poverty portfolio, the majority of changes occurred in terms of increased access to resources and opportunities. The targeting of women as the main beneficiaries of poverty reduction, often through microcredit and inclusive growth programmes, has rendered short-term results for gender equality and women's empowerment. In many cases, UNDP has lacked a comprehensive analysis that paid attention to gender factors and dynamics that go beyond access to resources and opportunities. Success was more readily evident in programmes that adopted a long-term perspective.

27. In terms of increased knowledge and skills, the UNDP Global Gender and Economic Policy Management Initiative has provided capacity development and advisory services to government planning and policy experts. Data suggest that the initiative's approach is relevant and potentially sustainable, although further evidence is needed to assess its overall effectiveness and longer-term impacts.

28. In terms of policy advice, UNDP developed and is currently implementing the Millennium Development Goal Acceleration Framework (MAF) which is a global approach to help countries overcome slow and uneven progress towards the achievement of the Goals, including goals on gender equality and women's empowerment and maternal health. To date, the MAF is present in over 50 countries, promoting gender equality in the national action plans as well as in the MAF planning processes.

29. UNDP programming in the area of HIV/AIDS has consistently advocated for a human development and human rights approach which strives to address deep change in cultural values and norms. It has also helped to move the HIV/AIDS paradigm away from a biomedical issue to addressing it as a broader development problem.

[10] Backlash as defined in the evaluation includes barriers to or reversals of progress.

30. **Democratic governance**. The greatest change occurred in the outcome areas of policies, laws and arrangements, where UNDP helped to strengthen national legal and institutional frameworks to advance women's rights, placing women and men on a more even footing. Compared to other focus areas, democratic governance had the most coverage in all of the four Gender@Work categories supporting the potential for contributing to more gender-transformative results. Results in this area were more often gender-responsive.

31. A shift in the consciousness and awareness of rights was a common result seen across UNDP programming in this area. A significant number of changes was recorded with respect to changes in consciousness. Gender results were also prominent in the outcome area of access to resources and opportunities. By supporting women in political caucuses, providing access to civic education and establishing safe electoral spaces, UNDP has helped to open doors for women in the political realm. However deeper shifts in attitudes and norms are needed to institutionalize both women's participation in political processes and equitable power distribution at a transformative level.

32. One the factors that helps to explain the success of UNDP in the democratic governance area has been in its promotion of gender equality by using the neutrality of its mandate and role as convener, knowledge broker, adviser and enabler supporting civil society, civic oversight actors, political parties as well as government. It has done this in situations where there are high stakes and a multitude of actors with vested interests. However, not all results were positive and programmes that were well intended at times had negative consequences because of failure to analyse gender roles and power relations that would allow for a full and equal participation of women. In other cases, despite the contribution of UNDP to creating an enabling environment, the presence of cultural norms and historical legacies of discrimination led to poor results.

33. **Crisis prevention and recovery.** Results from the Gender@Work framework found that overall gender results in this area contributed to changes in the access to resources and opportunities, with programmes focused on gender-targeted economic recovery. Results in the areas of consciousness and policies were related to the UNDP role in raising sustainable development concerns and promoting income-generation activities that increased the productive role of women. In terms of promoting women's access to justice, UNDP succeeded in rebuilding legal structures and setting up support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence. There were also instances of gender-blind programming with less positive results. The UNDP strategy known as the Eight-Point Agenda effectively formed the backbone of gender programming in crisis prevention and recovery and contributed to the Secretary-General's Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding.

34. **Energy and environment**. Overall gender results for energy and environment were limited in all Gender@Work outcome areas. The results reported were largely gender-targeted increases in access to resources and opportunities. There were no changes present in terms of internal culture and deep structure, and very few changes in relation to policies, laws and arrangements.

35. In 2012, UNDP adopted an environmental and social screening procedure for UNDP projects that addresses gender dimensions and fully complies with the Global Environment Facility (GEF) safeguards policy. The GEF standards seek to ensure that programmes do not cause undue harm to people or the environment. It is too early to make any conclusive assessment of whether programming has benefited from the gender dimensions of the screening procedure.

36. The GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) has reported good results on targeting of gender issues. According to a recent evaluation of the SGP, two thirds of the 30 country programme strategies reviewed have a relatively strong approach to addressing gender in

which they elaborated the concrete steps that should be taken. The 2013 evaluation of the Global Gender and Climate Alliance found that significant progress had been made towards delivering the intended outcomes of the Alliance. Gender is now well reflected in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change agreement texts and recognized as an official agenda item of the Conference of Parties, and is being included in the modalities for financing mechanisms. Furthermore, the foundation has been laid for delivering the intended outcomes through building capacities at regional and national levels. In contrast, a recent study on the United Nations collaborative initiative on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+) in developing countries, by Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management, concludes that women are not key stakeholders or beneficiaries of REDD+ because of their invisibility in the forest sector.

IV. Conclusions

Conclusion 1. There has been far-reaching change and a marked improvement in the UNDP approach to and implementation of policies to address gender mainstreaming since the last independent evaluation in 2006. UNDP has demonstrated greater awareness that gender matters to institutional and development results. It has produced a series of tools and established a number of institutional arrangements which have helped to strengthen its contribution to gender equality and women's empowerment.

37. The first UNDP gender equality strategy (2008-2013) was catalytic in promoting a number of instruments, tools and processes new to the organization since the 2006 evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP. The GSIC, which is chaired by the Associate Administrator and involves all bureaux heads, demonstrates senior-level attention and accountability. However, the extent to which GSIC deliberations and directions trickle down to influence staff at the regional and country office levels was less clear. While the gender marker achieved global application, its contribution in terms of conveying valid gender-enlightened programming is uneven since there has been variability in its use and a lack of quality assurance. The Gender Seal Certification pilot, which innovatively integrated institutional and programmatic aspects of gender mainstreaming, generated interest and deepened understanding that gender equality and women's empowerment will succeed only when it becomes an intrinsic part of the working life of every staff member.

Conclusion 2. While UNDP corporate messaging has highlighted the centrality of gender equality as having a multiplier effect across development results, it has yet to promote and fully resource gender as a main priority of the organization. Resource allocations dedicated to programming and staff to promote gender equality and women's empowerment decreased substantially during the period 2008-2014.

38. Dedicated resources at the global programme level for gender equality received an initial injection in 2009-2010 and declined in 2013 and 2014. Throughout the evaluation period, core allocations for gender were lower than for other focus areas. Non-core resources were also a significant part of the gender unit programming budget during the period 2008-2013.

39. While gender unit staffing reached a high of 23 posts in the early years of the strategic plan period, this had shrunk to eight posts by 2013. In 80 per cent of UNDP country offices, gender is attended to by focal points who devote only 20 per cent of their time to this work. For gender equality to be recognized as a central priority of the organization, it must be consistently upheld as a point of departure for all core operating and programmatic engagements.

Conclusion 3. UNDP was only partially successful in meeting the objective of the gender equality strategy that called for the UNDP development contribution to be gender-responsive. The majority of results to which UNDP contributed were gender-targeted. Furthermore, the finding that a small portion of results to which UNDP contributes could be described as gender-transformative means that UNDP will need to make the attainment of deeper gender results a central objective of its next strategic plan and beyond. While the focus area of democratic governance has seen the most systematic progress in terms of contributing in a gender-responsive manner, the other three focus areas of poverty and the Millennium Development Goals, crisis prevention and recovery, and energy and environment will require concerted attention. Moving to resilient gender-transformative change will require a longer lead time and UNDP will need to make a sustained commitment, ensure adequate funding and undertake periodic quality checks and assessments of gender results, if it is to stay the course.

40. The evaluation found that the majority of UNDP gender results were gender-targeted, meaning they most often focused on counting the number of men and women who participated in or benefited from programming in the areas of poverty, crisis prevention and environment. In contrast, nearly two thirds of results in the democratic governance focus area were gender-responsive, addressing the different needs of women and men and the equitable distribution of benefits, but not the deeper root causes of inequalities in their lives. Very few gender-transformative results emerged from the analysis which is understandable given that such results, which address the roots of inequalities and power imbalances, require time.

41. In terms of development results, UNDP had the most systematic approach and made the biggest difference in results in the areas of democratic governance and women's participation in political processes. Democratic governance had the most coverage in the four Gender@Work categories, which provides a promising foundation for contributing to more gender-transformative results in the future.

42. The other three focus areas will require concentrated support and attention to make progress on the continuum from gender-targeted to gender-transformative contributions supported by UNDP. In terms of poverty reduction, most results were gender-targeted in nature, limited to mentioning the percentage of women and men who had benefited, with attention focused on women's economic empowerment at an individual level and in a few instances on the integration of gender considerations in the Millennium Development Goal processes. Of the four focus areas, crisis prevention and recovery had the lowest number of gender results reported. Along with contributions in gender-targeted economic recovery, the integration of gender equality considerations in disaster risk management and attention to sexual and gender-based violence appear to be the most consistent areas of attention in the crisis prevention and recovery portfolio. The area of environment and energy reported the second lowest number of gender results. In community-based energy and environment projects, gender has not received broad-based, even attention and generally has been limited to the participation of women.

43. While UNDP has made progress since the last evaluation and has moved beyond the 'islands of success' finding of the 2006 evaluation, there is still much to do. Gender equality and women's empowerment are at the heart of the UNDP vision of eradicating extreme poverty and substantially reducing inequality and exclusion. However, in practice, work is often done from a targeting perspective that addresses practical needs through service delivery and access to resources, but not at the deeper level of strategic needs, which addresses structural change and the roots of discriminations and inequalities. Moving to transformational results is context-specific, takes time and requires a long-term programming perspective and approaches to monitoring, assessment and learning. Care

should also be taken to expand partnerships with gender-aware and women's rights organizations at the global, regional, and country levels. UNDP is well positioned to contribute given its sustained commitment to the countries where it works, as well as its political neutrality/impartiality when addressing what is often a very sensitive issue.

Conclusion 4. Pathways to achieving gender results are complex and depend on a variety of institutional and contextual factors. The evaluation learned that demonstrating a direct correlation between UNDP institutional reforms and development results was challenging for a number of reasons. Data constraints posed a key problem, but the far more important factor was the complexity of gender programming. Complexity is intrinsic to such programming which addresses issues that are deeply rooted in cultural mores, values and belief systems at both the individual and societal levels, and where much of the achievement of results is dependent on factors outside the control of UNDP.

44. At a basic level, when gender mainstreaming was integrated into programming and addressed the differential needs, status and roles of women and men, it was more likely that the programme yielded gendered development results. When gender analysis and mainstreaming were lacking, it was more likely that gender-negative, gender-blind or gender-targeted results occurred.

45. Internal factors associated with gendered development results were attributable to leadership commitment, particularly at the country level, and to accountability structures, gender-enlightened staff with a rights-based mindset and dedicated gender units promoting and monitoring performance. Other examples of the link between institutional and gendered development results were seen in programming which explicitly recognized and developed capacities to ensure that all stakeholders could consider themselves gender experts, which then were applied to programming and policy work. These programmes also actively sought to engage community members and women's groups in programme design and activities. Other programming elements included selecting partners who were gender-aware and strategically adapting programming based on the changing needs on the ground. An analysis of assessment of development results reports of 10 country offices with institutional results classified as gender-responsive or gender-transformative, found that eight of these country offices also had gendered development results. In all of these cases, gender-responsive or gender-transformative results were in the democratic governance focus area.

46. The evaluation found that some of the external factors of prime importance to gendered development results beyond the direct influence of UNDP included the sociopolitical context, national and donor interest and the presence of opportunities as well as backlash (which often affected the timing and trajectory of progress on results). Working in a country context where either the government was open to or supportive of gender equality and women's empowerment created an enabling environment for gendered development programming and this was considered a factor in some of the countries that were early winners of the Gold Seal in the Gender Seal Certification pilot. The presence of strong women's movements and civil society groups that advocated on behalf of gender issues was also key to gains in terms of development results that promoted gender equality and women's empowerment.

Conclusion 5. UNDP has yet to develop a firm corporate policy which ensures that gender analysis is a mandatory requirement in all programming. The lack of gender analysis explains to some extent why so many UNDP gender results are gender-targeted, gender-negative or gender-blind. The tools and processes to make gender equality and women's empowerment relevant to the work of staff members in

programme design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation have also not been sufficiently developed and applied. The gender marker and the results-oriented annual report, as well as monitoring and evaluation, require further refinements and a more consistent application if UNDP is to increase the quality of its gender interventions, reporting and the assessment of its contributions.

47. Programming for gender equality and women's empowerment requires strong, context-specific analysis in order to identify possible unintended effects and understand the potential for backlash when advances are made. These analyses should be evident at the country programme level and also in individual programme and project interventions. In this connection, the gender marker has the potential to play a useful role at the design and appraisal stage and during monitoring, assessment and evaluation.

48. Although the gender marker is used primarily to track overall trends in gender mainstreaming in UNDP programmes, it also aims to improve overall UNDP reporting and accountability on gender equality through tracking of budgeting and expenditures for gender equality results. However, as currently used, it does not capture financial expenditures and allocations in a consistent and reliable manner. Aggregation of the amounts of resources dedicated to gender equality does not provide a clear enough picture of how the resources are allocated and used. If it is to fulfil the goal of tracking expenditure, improving accountability and enhancing transparency, UNDP has yet to develop clear guidelines on how to allocate gender marker ratings at the project and country programme outcome levels, and ensure there is a clear, organization-wide understanding of how to apply this guidance. Better gender analysis and consistent gender marker practice could help to ensure that both the decentralized and independent evaluation functions, as well as audit, have a sounder basis for assessing the contribution of UNDP to gender equality and women's empowerment.

Conclusion 6. UNDP has demonstrated that the goal of gender parity is important, although results up to this point remain at a gender-targeted level. Gender parity has been successful in terms of equitable numbers of men and women occupying the lowest and highest positions in the organization. However, at the critical middle levels (P-4/P-5 and D-1/D-2), parity has not been achieved. Men enter the organization at higher levels and get promoted more quickly than women. The culture and unwritten rules about who gets promoted and valued, and whose voices are heard, require deeper attention to truly achieve gender equality.

49. Although the gender parity strategy is a step in the right direction in trying to address concerns, there is a lack of deeper analysis. Reflection that goes beyond a parity focus will be necessary if the organization is to arrive at a more complete picture of the power relationships and gender dynamics that are at play. The data from the annual global staff surveys consistently show that there are gaps between men's and women's positive experiences with respect to empowerment, professional growth, openness, fairness/respect, work-life balance and office management. Gender parity is generally reported at the aggregate level at both the regional and headquarters levels, which may obscure a more differentiated picture of the situation in individual country offices and units.

Conclusion 7. Although UNDP has a historically close and often collaborative relationship with UN-Women that has matured as UN-Women has reorganized its organizational footprint globally, there is room for further clarification of partnership arrangements. UNDP has yet to define and communicate its comparative strengths on gender issues to ensure that its interventions are strategic and add value. The headquarters of both agencies could facilitate the clarification process, which ideally should also take place in the regional and country contexts.

50. Formally clarifying the relationship between UNDP and UN-Women and specifying each agency's comparative strengths and different entry points could help to ensure smoother working relationships at all levels of both organizations. This should help both agencies to establish working arrangements, particularly in areas where they address similar development challenges and can add significant value to each other's initiatives. The establishment of improved working arrangements needs to acknowledge that a one-size-fits-all approach will be inadequate and that partnership is based on mutual understanding and a clear appreciation of contextual factors. Successful cases of joint initiatives could inform this process. It could also provide an opportunity for UNDP to communicate its thought leadership on and contributions to gender equality and women's empowerment to national governments, partners and donors.

V. Recommendations

Recommendation 1. UNDP should align its resources and programming with its corporate message on the centrality of supporting gender equality and women's empowerment as a means to 'fast forward' development results. Gender mainstreaming should also go beyond providing sex-disaggregated data for all results areas of the Strategic Plan. In this connection, the merits of integrating the gender equality strategy as part of the next strategic plan (2018 onwards) should receive serious consideration.

51. Given that the vision of UNDP is to achieve the simultaneous eradication of poverty and significant reduction of inequalities and exclusion, the organization should systematically undertake programming that addresses all facets of gender-based discrimination. UNDP needs to make further efforts to institutionalize a more complete understanding of gender, gender equality and women's empowerment that goes beyond targeting and be able to report accurately on financial allocations and expenditures on gender. If the gender marker is not suited for this level of specificity, it is recommended that a new tracking and benchmark system be established. Furthermore, as specific financial benchmarks have been established in the current UNDP gender equality strategy, 2014-2017, these should be closely monitored and reported to the Executive Board.

52. Moreover, UNDP should assess the merits and demerits of integrating the Strategic Plan and the gender equality strategy and making key gender results mandatory. Additionally, guidance documents that promote alignment between the Strategic Plan and country programmes documents should require a gender analysis to be done for all programming developed within country programmes that set out medium-term objectives (over a 5-10 year period) along with other contextual analyses. The gender analysis done in the country programme context should have corresponding indicators, monitoring, assessment, and evaluation mechanisms at the programme and project levels.

53. Deeper attention to gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming is required, especially in the focus areas on conflict prevention and recovery and energy and environment, which saw the lowest number of gender results and the highest rates of targeting. Work in the focus areas on poverty and the Millennium Development Goals and democratic governance can deepen intentions and action towards gender-responsive and gender-transformative results. All UNDP programming and policies should be attentive to framing women as agents and active citizens. If UNDP aims to contribute to transformative change, it will need to accelerate efforts in all focus areas to more strategically target the roots of inequalities, structures of unequal power, participation and relations, and address and transform unequal norms, values and policies.

Recommendation 2. Given the uneven performance in the four focus areas of the Strategic Plan, 2008-2013 in promoting gender development results, UNDP should ensure that future assessments pay specific attention to the progress, effectiveness and quality of gender development results in the seven outcome areas of the current Strategic Plan.

54. The upcoming midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2014-2017 presents an opportunity to set in place a framework for such an assessment. The assessment can build on the limited data from the Integrated Results and Resources Framework Report Cards that summarize the progress and performance of UNDP in 2014 and include a deeper, qualitative analysis of the UNDP contribution to gender results on the ground. Preliminary lessons of the Gender Equality Seal Certification process, which has been completed in 28 country offices (and implemented on a non-certification basis in others), could also be a rich source of information.

Recommendation 3. UNDP should focus on refining tools, instruments and processes developed during the period 2008-2013 and focus on further internalizing the centrality of gender equality and women's empowerment to the achievement of all development goals among staff. Specific recommendations on these improvements and possible new areas of intervention are discussed below:

(a) **Gender analysis should become mandatory in all programming and be linked with justifying the gender marker rating of each UNDP intervention.** Revised gender marker guidance (2014) indicates that ideally, a gender analysis should be done during the project design, before the coding, to determine the most effective strategies in a particular context and to identify results that support gender equality. However, gender analysis should go beyond being optional and become a required first step. This will contribute to more context-specific gender assessment and will minimize inaccurate gender marker ratings that will enhance the credibility of this tool. Furthermore, such analysis should specify the areas of change and the role and contribution of UNDP in the change process, on the spectrum from gender-blind to gender-transformative;

(b) **The gender marker should track allocations in a way that provides reliable aggregated data at different stages of the project cycle.** It should be subject to random external checks and also be systematically assessed by internal audit exercises. The new guidance should be monitored and assessed on an annual basis to make this a reliable instrument to measure progress in terms of UNDP programming. Furthermore, if the gender marker is not suited for tracking expenditures with a credible level of specificity at the project and outcome levels, it is recommended that consideration be given to developing a new tracking and benchmark system. Added benefits of an improved gender marker system could be its greater use for resource mobilization, greater accountability, gender-responsive budgeting and gender-informed management decision-making;

(c) **The Gender Seal requires senior management's attention in terms of its future role as a corporate certification initiative.** To facilitate this process, the Gender Seal pilot should be assessed by a team of independent advisers to guide its application as it enters a critical post-pilot phase. Such an assessment could be of value in documenting and assessing the pilot process including aspects such as the methodology, the resources required and the sustainability of the Gender Seal country interventions (including recertification), and explore institutionalizing different options to the standard gold, silver and bronze seal process. The focus should be on lessons learned that should inform the choices, costs, opportunities and downsides that the Gender Seal may encounter as it moves into post-pilot implementation. The Gender Seal approach could also be extended to national ministries and partners where opportunities, interest and needs are expressed;

(d) **Stronger attention should be placed on using the GSIC forum as a venue for organization-wide learning, problem-solving and sharing of instructive practices.** All key organizational entities in UNDP should provide reports on progress in terms of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment and participate in discussions during annual 'gender days'. The GSIC should play a more active role in assessing UNDP reporting to the UN-SWAP and taking stock of feedback received (from UN-Women) on UNDP performance in the UN-SWAP process. This should facilitate the review of instructive practices from other organizations that may be applied in UNDP. Additionally, there is a need to revitalize the functioning of regional GSICs as envisaged in the gender equality strategy (2008-2013). Consideration should be given to having a mandatory agenda item in regional bureaux cluster meetings on a regular basis;

(e) **The GSIC should ensure that the gender parity strategy is revised and a roll-out programme is articulated.** Attention should be paid to addressing the concerns expressed in the global staff surveys and in terms of the gaps between men's and women's positive experiences with respect to empowerment, professional growth, openness, fairness, respect, work-life balance and office management. Annual reports to the Executive Board should include more detailed information on problems and progress in terms of achieving parity targets and actions. It may also help to rename the strategy to signal a 'beyond parity' approach to addressing staff culture and morale;

(f) **UNDP should strengthen capacity development processes that focus on gender mainstreaming so they are relevant and apply to staff's daily work and needs.** Online training courses should be independently assessed to determine whether they are useful and should be continued. In addition, the mentorship programming implemented in the regional bureaux for Africa and Asia and the Pacific and the leadership programmes being made available are examples of targeted investments with coaching and benchmarks. The efficacy and impact of these recent initiatives should be carefully tracked, assessed and reported to the GSIC. Other initiatives for capacity-building and awareness development could include unit or country office training plans with focused gender sessions that encourage lively and open discussions and debates, and include critical analysis of the portrayal of men and women in the media, current events and guest lecturers;

(g) **UNDP should consider exploring new frontiers for engaging in gender issues that go beyond women's issues, for example the 'masculinity' agenda.** UNDP should engage more fully in working with men and other populations that suffer from gender discrimination and consider undertaking research that addresses how exclusion negatively affects progress in development.

Recommendation 4. Country offices should prepare gender plans that identify gaps and needs in terms of technical support, capacity-building, joint action and advocacy and collective monitoring that facilitate stronger gender programming. These plans should also help to identify areas where UNDP can draw on expertise and leverage the existing capacities of other United Nations agencies active on gender issues at the country level. This process should be supported, monitored and reported upon by the respective regional bureaux to the GSIC on annual basis.

55. Gender-capacity benchmarks have been set by the Executive Board in terms of in-country gender expertise, a welcome development that should promote better gender analysis, programming and results in the 40 countries that meet the criteria. However, to ensure more even attention to all countries and because country offices are expected to prepare gender plans, it is suggested that regional bureaux take specific measures to support the preparation of these multi-year, country-specific gender plans and monitor and report on their formulation and implementation to the GSIC. This process will provide an opportunity for offices to assess their needs and gaps at the country level and to articulate

expectations for support from the regional service centres in terms of promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

56. Additionally, these plans may also provide an opportunity for UNDP to define its comparative strengths in terms of contributing to gender equality and women's empowerment and to explore partnerships with United Nations agencies, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and UN-Women (see conclusion 7 above for more details with reference to UN-Women).

Recommendation 5. UNDP currently does not have a measurement standard to systematically track the type, quality and effectiveness of its contribution to gender results that also captures the context of change and the degree of its contribution to that change. In order to address this issue, UNDP should codify the way it wishes to monitor, report, evaluate and audit its contributions to gender and this framework should be used for rigorously tracking results for gender equality and women's empowerment at the country, regional and global levels.

57. Overall, UNDP is currently using a number of different metrics, which may confuse rather than clarify future efforts for gender equality and women's empowerment. Action should be taken to harmonize various assessment scales in a manner that is most meaningful for corporate programming, reporting, evaluation and audit. These elements should be embedded in iterative learning systems that go beyond linear performance frameworks which are limited to reporting on indicators focusing on sex-disaggregated data.

58. More attention to the quality of gender results and the context within which changes happen is required in UNDP monitoring and assessment systems. UNDP may want to reflect on the usefulness of having quality and type measures such as the gender results effectiveness scale and Gender@Work frameworks used in this evaluation to move beyond the tendency to focus on numbers of women and men and targeting strategies to more responsive and transformative results. The practice of gender audits should also become a more standard feature throughout the organization.

59. While UNDP has made significant improvements in tracking gender results at the country level through the results-oriented annual report, the system has limitations in terms of capturing diverse and non-linear change that is often characterized with the 'two steps forward, one step back' phenomenon. UNDP should start systematically to track the types of with which it partners to have a comprehensive picture of its partnerships at the global, regional and country levels. Monitoring and assessment should include tracking of backlash, efforts to maintain past gains and identify accelerators and barriers to change to better contextualize change processes and learn from what is working under different conditions and contexts. This will help UNDP to articulate its role, most importantly at the country level, which will remain the primary unit of analysis in terms of assessing the short-, medium- and long-term contribution of UNDP to gender equality and women's empowerment.